



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 24, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabo Berces**



Source: National Geographic

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Just as many of you, I find joy in nature and marvel at the big and small miracles of the world we call home. I agree that we can find beauty anywhere we look! For example, I wasn't happy at first when my daughter noticed the snow falling in North West Calgary last night. But then as we looked out the window and saw the transfigured trees in our street, it was really breathtaking! All of them were dressed in white like brides, and their attractiveness was increased by the street lights that fell on them.

There are so many phenomena that we can notice, and in which we can rejoice, regardless of seasons and the place where we live. We can notice as the sun shines on the snow and makes it sparkle if there were millions of diamonds laid before us. We can admire the gorgeous colors of sunrises and sunsets; as the sunrays puncture through the clouds, or shine through green leaves during summertime.

We can watch the beauty and variety of the living creatures around us: the innumerable kinds of birds, cute bunnies and squirrels, or elegant deer and horses; how the Canadian gees congregate as they travel when the seasons change, and appreciate when we can glimpse migrant birds arriving from the South. I could use this whole page to list the beauties and joy I discover in this creation!

And if I feel blessed to see those marvels of this planet and this universe, how much more should I stand in awe when I think about the One who brought all this into being! I can relate to King David's words: **"Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! ... When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"** (Psalm 8:1; 3-4)

As we worship together on Sundays, and as we live our daily lives in between, we have the privilege to call the Almighty Creator of this universe *"Our Father"*, whose **"love endures forever"** (Psalm 136); who is **"compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."** (Psalm 86:15)

As we start this week, let us remember that beyond the gifts we have received in this stunning planet, God offers us a personal, living relationship with the Creator and Sustainer of this world. Whether we enjoy family and friends or not, the Holy One is ready to provide us belonging to not less than through whom **"all things were made"** (John 1:3). We are given the opportunity to grow in understanding, in faith, and in the likeness of God's Son, Jesus.

May we notice the beauties that are around us in this world. And may we also recognize that the Creator of all these wonders seeks a personal, everyday connection with us, in which we can **"say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."** (Psalm 91:2)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



God's Footprints

How many are your works, Lord!
Psalm 104:24

READ PSALM 104:24-35

"I know where God lives," our four-year-old grandson told my wife, Cari. "Where is that?" she asked, her curiosity piqued. "He lives in the woods beside your house," he answered.

When Cari told me about their conversation, she wondered what prompted his thinking. "I know," I responded. "When we went for a walk in the woods during his last visit, I told him that even though we can't see God, we can see the things He's done." "Do you see the footprints I'm making?" I had asked my grandson as we stepped through a sandy place by a river. "The animals and the trees and the river are like God's footprints. We know that He's been here because we can see the things He's made."

The writer of Psalm 104 also pointed to the evidence for God in creation, exclaiming "How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (v. 24). The Hebrew word for wisdom found here is often used in the Bible to describe skillful craftsmanship. God's handiwork in nature proclaims His presence and makes us want to praise Him.

Psalm 104 begins and ends with the words: "Praise the Lord" (vv. 1, 35). From a baby's hand to an eagle's eye, our Creator's artistry all around us speaks of His consummate skill. May we take it all in with wonder today—and praise Him for it! – By **James Banks**

REFLECT & PRAY

I praise You for all You've made, God! Help me to live in wonder at Your wisdom and goodness today. Amen.

Where do you see God's handiwork in creation? How might you point someone to it—and to Him—today?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Psalm 104 displays some striking similarities to the Egyptian Akhenaten's great Hymn to the Sun (fourteenth century BC), including depictions of creatures of night and day, provision for beasts and birds, descriptions of the sea and its ships, and the dependence of all creatures on their Creator. But Psalm 104 is structured by the sequence of creation found in Genesis 1: light is produced on day one (Psalm 104:2), the "vault" or "firmament" on day two (vv. 2-4), land and water are separated on day three (vv. 5-9), and so on. The psalm's connection to Genesis 1 highlights the Creator's role in creation. While the Egyptian hymn calls for worship of the sun, Psalm 104 calls for worship of the sun's Maker. It seems the psalmist deliberately alludes to the Egyptian hymn in order to critique it and to make this very point: true worship is offered to the Creator, not the creation. – By **Con Campbell**

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